

Conference Abstract

People: From a Collection Manager's Viewpoint

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Abstract

The specimens held in natural history collections around the world are the direct result of the effort of thousands of people over hundreds of years. However, the way that the names of these people have been recorded within the collections has never been fully standardised, and this makes the process of correctly assigning the event relating to the specimen to an individual difficult at best, and impossible at worst.

The events in which people are related to specimens include collecting, identifying, naming, loaning and owning. Whilst there are resources in the botanical community that hold information on many collectors and authors of plant names, the residual number of unknown people and the effort required to disambiguate them is daunting.

Moreover, in many cases, the work carried out within the collection to disambiguate the names relating to the specimens is often not recorded and made available, generally due to the lack of a system to do so. This situation is making it extremely difficult to search for collections within the main aggregators, such as GBIF —the Global Biodiversity Information Facility—, and severely hampers our ability to link collections both within and between institutes and disciplines. When we look at benefits of linking collections and people, the need to agree and implement a system of managing people names becomes increasingly urgent.

Keywords

authority management, people names, identifiers

Presenting author

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